

NEWS FROM THE BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY

A DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & COMMERCE, LESTER SPELL JR. D.V.M., COMMISSIONER

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State Ag Department issues
restrictions on aerial application
of pre-plant herbicides

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce will require manufacturers of certain herbicides to issue supplemental labeling restricting application by aircraft to prevent off-target drift. The restriction on the herbicides does not apply to applications made with ground equipment.

Herbicides registered for pre-plant burn-down that contain the active ingredients glyphosate, sulfosate or paraquat are only affected.

State Agriculture Commissioner Lester Spell took this action after receiving many complaints this past year of injury to off-target crops and private property. "Over 145 cases of drift were reported to the Department last year," Spell stated.

"This action is being taken after careful consideration," Spell continued. "We will work with farmers and applicators to ensure that all needed applications of these products can be made within the conditions provided on the label. Every effort will be made to ensure the farmer successfully completes his planting. However, we are committed to preventing misuse by applicators. If we do not take action now, these important products may not be available to us in the future."

Aerial application of pre-plant, burn-down herbicides that contain the active ingredients of glyphosate, sulfosate or paraquat will be restricted from March 15 through April 30, the timeframe last year in which nearly 95% of the complaints involving these products were received.

The restriction will be in effect in the following counties: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo. These counties were where most reported incidents occurred.

The Department has authority under Section 24c of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) to register a pesticide for a special local use or restrict the use of a pesticide product.

Farmers who face extreme weather conditions can apply for an emergency exemption to the restriction. The Department will verify the exemption and issue an application permit if:

1. Access to a field site by ground application equipment is not a reasonable option; and,
2. The producer or applicator has obtained emergency verification from a representative of the Bureau of Plant Industry.

The exemption permit will indicate the location and the allowable timeframe of the application. Before the application of the herbicide occurs, an inspector from the Department's Bureau of Plant Industry will be on site to assess the environmental conditions. Concerted effort will be made to minimize the turnaround time on these requests so that each farmer's emergency need can be met.

Specific restrictions on aerial applications of specific pre-plant, burn-down herbicides will include not permitting spraying when wind velocity exceeds five miles per hour or when other unfavorable conditions exist, including climatic conditions which create atmospheric inversions.